

Message Text

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SUBJECT: FOOD SUPPLIES IN MINSK

1. SUMMARY . TAH EXHIBIT OFFICER IN MINSK MADE PERIODIC SATURDAY MORNING VISITS IN FEBRUARY TO THE CENTRAL FARM MARKET, "KOMOROVKA". INITIALLY POOR FOOD SITUATION, PARTICULARLY FOR VEGETABLES, SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVED AS THE MONTH WORE ON. END SUMMARY.

2. INITIAL VISIT TO KOMOROVSKIY MARKET (KMOROOVKA) FEBRUARY 7 FOUND EXCEPTIONALLY SCARCE AVAILABILITY OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES WHICH, EXCEPT FOR POOR QUALITY APPLES, WERE ALMOST NON-EXISTENT. ONLY ONE PERSON WAS SELLING CARROTS AND TWO PERSONS AT A SEPARATE STAND WERE TRADING IN POTATOES AT .30. HOWEVER, SUBSTANTIAL NUMBERS OF MERCHANTS FROM THE CAUCASUS OR CENTRAL ASIA WERE SELLING PEANUTS AND POMEGRANATES. POOR QUALITY MEAT, HOWEVER, SEEMED QUITE PLENTIFUL BOTH IN INDIVIDUAL STALLS AND IN THE MARKET'S CENTRAL MEAT PAVILION. SEEMINGLY HOME-MADE UKRAINIAN-STYLE KOLBASA SOLD FOR 2.60, GROUND BEEF ("FARSH") FOR 1.56. IN THE MAIN MEAT PAVILION, RATHER POOR-GRADE PORK WENT FOR 2.30 AND BETTER-QUALITY BEEF FOR 3.50. AT THE LATTER COUNTER A CUSTOMER

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WAS OVERHEARD TO COMPLAIN, "THREE FUBLES FIFTY FOR THIS SORT

OF STUFF*", WITH THE SCORN OF ONE ACCUSTOMED TO BETTER THINGS.
THE SALES PERSON RESPONDED WITH THE EQUIVALENT OF "PRICES
ARE HIGHER NOW" ("NO I DOROZHE SEYCHAS").

3. FOLLOWUP OBSERVATIONS AT THE KOMAROVKA MARKET FOUND A
NOTICEABLE IMPROVEMENT IN FRUIT AND VEGETABLES SUPPLIES BUT
LITTLE CHANGE IN THE MEAT SITUATION. CARROTS, POTATOES,
SHABBY CABBAGES, BEETS, CELERY ROOT AND VARIOUS ITEMS LIKE
SAUERKRAUT WERE READILY AVAILABLE. APPLES WERE IN ABUNDANCE
FROM 1.30-2.00 AS WERE DRIED FRUITS AND THE USUAL CENTRAL ASIAN
AND CAUCASIAN OFFERINGS OF NUTS, PEANUTS, POMEGRANATES AND THE
ONLY ONIONS OFFERED IN THE ENTIRE MARKET -- FRESH FROM
ANDIZHEN OBLAST' IN UZBEKISTAN. GENERALLY POOR QUALITY MEAT
OFFERINGS CONTINUED. EXCEPT FOR POULTRY (LARGE CRATES OF
CHICKENS FROM THE BREST MEAT PACKING PLANT) AND AN
OCCASIONAL GOOSE OR DUCK OFFERED BY A KOLKHOZNIK, NO MEAT WAS
OBSERVED EXCEPT IN THE MAIN MEAT PAVILION. THERE IT WAS QUITE
PLENTIFUL BUT OF EVEN WORSE QUALITY THAN BEFORE. MOST OFFER-
INGS CONSISTED OF FAT AND GRIT WITH A FEW LONELY STRANDS OF
FLESH INTERSPERSED.

THE BIG SELLER WAS "SALA" -- THE TRADITIONAL
UKRAINIAN AND BYELORUSSIAN FATBACK. MEDIOCRE PORK
WAS OFFERED AT 2.30 AND, ALLEGEDLY, BEEF FOR 3.50.

4. THREE ITEMS WHICH HAD NOT BEEN IN EVIDENCE ON PREVIOUS
VISITS HAD TURNED UP ON FEBRUARY 28 MORNING INSPECTION:
PARSLEY, GREEN ONIONS AND RABBITS (CLEANED AND DRESSED).
LARGE CROWDS SURROUNDED THE RESPECTIVE STANDS WHICH PRE-
VENTED THE REPORTING OFFICER FROM ASCERTAINING PRICES AND
QUALITY. OTHER ITEMS IN GOOD SUPPLY IN THE OPEN AIR MARKET
WERE CHICKENS AT 2.20, CABBAGE 1.00, APPLES FROM 1.50 - 2.00,
DRIED FRUIT, POTATOES AND CARROTS AT .60. THE BETTER-STOCKED
MARKET WAS SOMEWHAT SURPRISINGLY SHORT OF CENTRAL ASIAN AND
CAUCASIAN MERCHANTS. IN THIS OPEN-AIR PORTION OF THE MARKET
THE DEARTH OF PREVIOUS MEAT OFFERINGS WAS RECTIFIED WITH
UKRAINIAN UNCOOKED BIELBASA AVAILABLE AT 2.60 AND SMOKED
"MOSCOW" KILBASA ATTRACTING CROWDS AT 3.30. THE MEAT
PAVILION HAD PLENTIFUL AND SOMEWHAT HIGHER QUALITY OFFERINGS
THAN PREVIOUS WEEKS.

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